Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

MY MASTER

"One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways."

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

MY MASTER

By

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
4 Wellington Lane, Calcutta 13

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

Published by
SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA
President, Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas

Eleventh Impression 1956

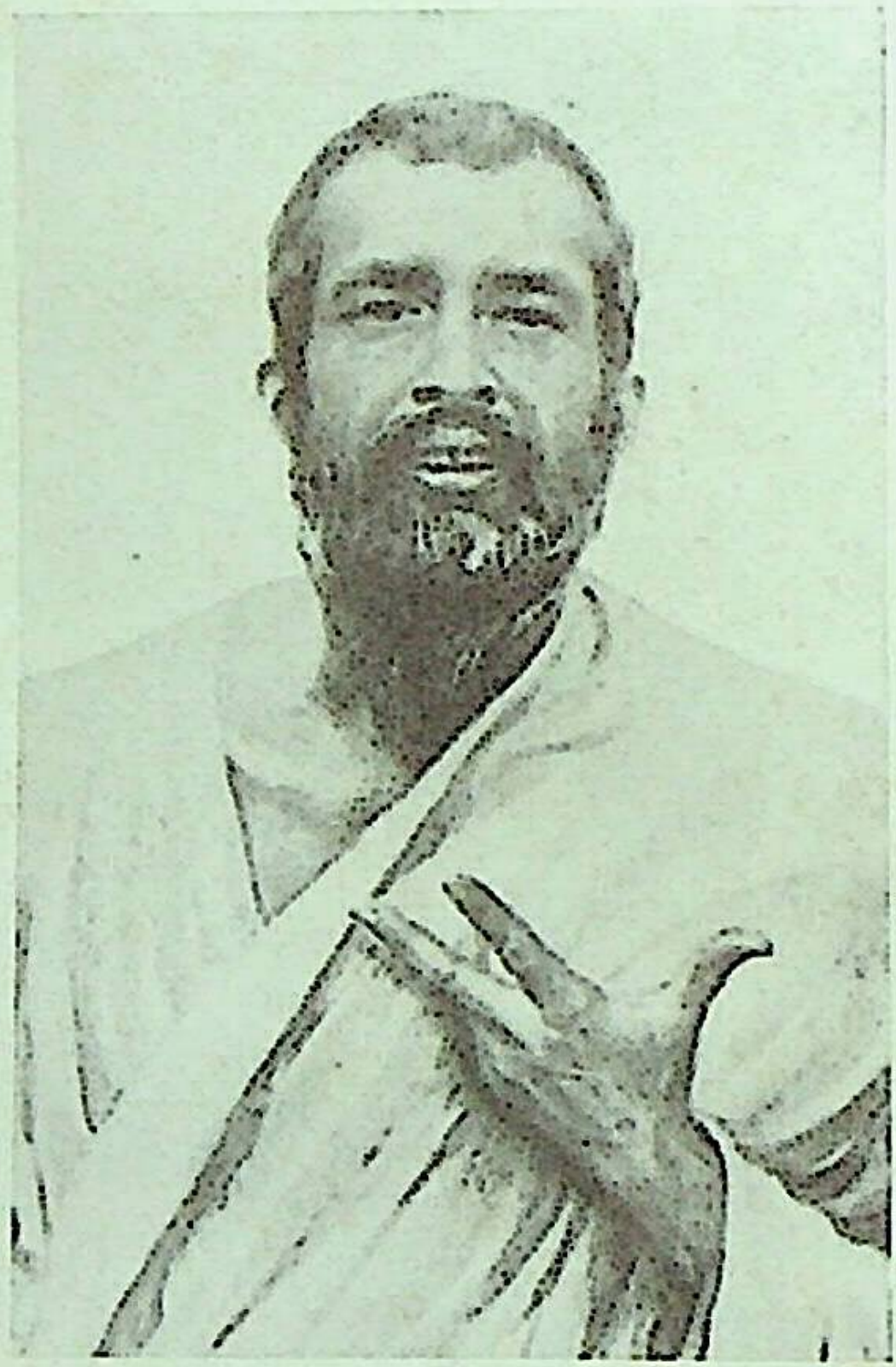
Printed in India
BY B. K. SEN
At The Modern India Press
7 Wellington Square
Calcutta 13

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS



Sri Ramakrishna

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

MY MASTER

[*Delivered in New York*]

"Whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails, I come down to help mankind," declares Krishna, in the Bhagavad-Gitâ. Whenever this world of ours, on account of growth, on account of added circumstances, requires a new adjustment, a wave of power comes; and as man is acting on two planes, the spiritual and the material, waves of adjustment come on both planes. On the one side, of the adjustment on the material plane, Europe has mainly been the basis during modern times; and of the adjustment on the other, the spiritual plane, Asia has been the basis throughout the history of the world. Today, man requires one more adjustment on the spiritual plane; today, when material ideas are at the height of their glory and power, today, when man is likely to forget his

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

divine nature, through his growing dependence on matter, and is likely to be reduced to a mere money-making machine, an adjustment is necessary; the voice has spoken, and the power is coming to drive away the clouds of gathering materialism. The power has been set in motion which, at no distant date, will bring unto mankind once more the memory of its real nature, and again the place from which this power will start will be Asia.

This world of ours is on the plan of the division of labour. It is vain to say that one man shall possess everything. Yet how childish we are! The baby in its ignorance thinks that its doll is the only possession that is to be coveted in this whole universe. So a nation which is great in the possession of material power thinks that that is all that is to be coveted, that that is all that is meant by progress, that that is all that is meant by civilisation, and if

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

there are other nations which do not care for possession, and do not possess that power, they are not fit to live, their whole existence is useless! On the other hand, another nation may think that mere material civilisation is utterly useless. From the Orient came the voice which once told the world that if a man possesses everything that is under the sun and does not possess spirituality, what avails it? This is the Oriental type; the other is the Occidental type.

Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonising, the mingling of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him. To the Occidental he is a dreamer; to the Oriental, the Occidental is a dreamer,

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

playing with ephemeral toys, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer. But the Oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the Occidental, and I think it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this, will claim that happiness is in the machine; but it is always in the mind. The man alone who is the lord of his mind can become happy, and none else. And what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man and a very intelligent man? Does not Nature do a million times more than that every moment? Why not then fall down and worship Nature? What avails it if you have power over

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

the whole of the world, if you have mastered every atom in the universe? That will not make you happy unless you have the power of happiness in yourself, until you have conquered yourself. Man is born to conquer Nature, it is true, but the Occidental means by "Nature," only physical or external Nature. It is true that external Nature is majestic, with its mountains, and oceans, and rivers, and with its infinite powers and varieties. Yet there is a more majestic internal Nature of man, higher than the sun, moon, and stars, higher than this earth of ours, higher than the physical universe, transcending these little lives of ours; and it affords another field of study. There the Orientals excel, just as the Occidentals excel in the other. Therefore it is fitting that, whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the Orient. It is also fitting that when the Oriental wants to learn about machine-

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

making, he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the Occident wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and the mystery of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn.

I am going to present before you the life of one man who has put in motion such a wave in India. But before going into the life of this man, I will try to present before you the secret of India, what India means. If those whose eyes have been blinded by the glamour of material things, whose whole dedication of life is to eating and drinking and enjoying, whose ideal of possession is lands and gold, whose ideal of pleasure is that of the senses, whose God is money, and whose goal is a life of ease and comfort in this world and death after that, whose minds never look forward, and who rarely think of anything higher than the sense-objects in the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

midst of which they live—if such as these go to India, what do they see? Poverty, squalor, superstition, darkness, hideousness everywhere. Why? Because in their minds enlightenment means dress, education, social politeness. Whereas Occidental nations have used every effort to improve their material position, India has done differently. There live the only men in the world who, in the whole history of humanity, never went beyond their frontiers to conquer any one, who never coveted that which belonged to any one else, whose only fault was that their lands were so fertile, and they accumulated wealth by the hard labour of their hands, and so tempted other nations to come and despoil them. They are contented to be despoiled, and to be called barbarians; and in return they want to send to this world visions of the Supreme, to lay bare for the world the secrets of human nature, to rend the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

veil that conceals the real man, because they know the dream, because they know that behind this materialism lives the real, divine nature of man which no sin can tarnish, no crime can spoil, no lust can taint, which fire cannot burn, nor water wet, which heat cannot dry, nor death kill. And to them this true nature of man is as real as is any material object to the senses of an Occidental.

Just as you are brave to jump at the mouth of a cannon with a hurrah, just as you are brave in the name of patriotism, to stand up and give up your lives for your country, so are they brave in the name of God. There it is that when a man declares that this is a world of ideas that it is all a dream, he casts off clothes and property to demonstrate that what he believes and thinks is true. There it is that a man sits on the bank of a river, when he has known that life is eternal, and wants to give up his body

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

just as nothing, just as you can give up a bit of straw. Therein lies their heroism, that they are ready to face death as a brother, because they are convinced that there is no death for them. Therein lies the strength that has made them invincible through hundreds of years of oppression and foreign invasion and tyranny. The nation lives today, and in that nation even in the days of the direst disaster, spiritual giants have never failed to arise. Asia produces giants in spirituality, just as the Occident produces giants in politics, giants in science. In the beginning of the present century, when Western influence began to pour into India, when Western conquerors, sword in hand, came to demonstrate to the children of the sages that they were mere barbarians, a race of dreamers, that their religion was but mythology, and God and soul and everything they had been struggling for were mere words without meaning, that

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

the thousands of years of struggle, the thousands of years of endless renunciation, had all been in vain, the question began to be agitated among young men at the universities whether the whole national existence up to then had been a failure, whether they must begin anew on the Occidental plan, tear up their old books, burn their philosophies, drive away their preachers, and break down their temples. Did not the Occidental conqueror, the man who demonstrated his religion with sword and gun, say, that all the old ways were mere superstition and idolatry? Children brought up and educated in the new schools started on the Occidental plan, drank in these ideas, from their childhood; and it is not to be wondered at that doubts arose. But instead of throwing away superstition and making a real search after truth, the test of truth became, "What does the West say?" The priests must go, the Vedas must be

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

burned, because the West has said so. Out of the feeling of unrest thus produced, there arose a wave of so-called reform in India.

If you wish to be a true reformer, three things are necessary. The first is to feel. Do you really feel for your brothers? Do you really feel that there is so much misery in the world, so much ignorance and superstition? Do you really feel that men are your brothers? Does this idea come into your whole being? Does it run with your blood? Does it tingle in your veins? Does it course through every nerve and filament of your body? Are you full of that idea of sympathy? If you are, that is only the first step. You must think next if you have found any remedy. The old ideas may be all superstition, but in and round these masses of superstition are nuggets of gold and truth. Have you discovered means by which to keep that gold alone, without any of the dross? If you have

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

done that, that is only the second step; one more thing is necessary. What is your motive? Are you sure that you are not actuated by greed of gold, by thirst for fame or power? Are you really sure that you can stand to your ideals and work on, even if the whole world wants to crush you down? Are you sure you know what you want and will perform your duty, and that alone, even if your life is at stake? Are you sure that you will persevere so long as life endures, so long as there is one pulsation left in the heart? Then you are a real reformer, you are a teacher, a Master, a blessing to mankind. But man is so impatient, so short-sighted! He has not the patience to wait, he has not the power to see. He wants to rule, he wants results immediately. Why? He wants to reap the fruits himself, and does not really care for others. Duty for duty's sake is not what he wants. "To work you have the right, but not to

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

the fruits thereof," says Krishna. Why cling to results? Ours are the duties. Let the fruits take care of themselves. But man has no patience. He takes up any scheme. The larger number of would-be reformers all over the world can be classed under this heading.

As I have said, the idea of reform came to India when it seemed as if the wave of materialism that had invaded her shores would sweep away the teachings of the sages. But the nation had borne the shocks of a thousand such waves of change. This one was mild in comparison. Wave after wave has flooded the land, breaking and crushing everything for hundreds of years; the sword had flashed, and "Victory unto Allah" had rent the skies of India; but these floods subsided leaving the national ideals unchanged.

The Indian nation cannot be killed. Deathless it stands, and it will stand so long as that spirit shall remain as the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

background, so long as her people do not give up their spirituality. Beggars they may remain, poor and poverty-stricken; dirt and squalor may surround them perhaps throughout all time, but let them not give up their God, let them not forget that they are the children of the sages. Just as in the West, even the man in the street wants to trace his descent from some robber-baron of the Middle Ages, so in India, even an Emperor on the throne wants to trace his descent from some beggar-sage in the forest, from a man who wore the bark of a tree, lived upon the fruits of the forest and communed with God. That is the type of descent we want; and so long as holiness is thus supremely venerated, India cannot die.

Many of you perhaps have read the article by Prof. Max Müller in a recent issue of the *Nineteenth Century*, headed "A Real Mahâtman." The life of Shri Ramakrishna is interesting, as it was a

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

living illustration of the ideas that he preached. Perhaps it will be a little romantic for you who live in the West in an atmosphere entirely different from that of India. For the methods and manners in the busy rush of life in the West vary entirely from those in India. Yet perhaps it will be of all the more interest for that, because it will bring into a newer light, things about which many have already heard.

It was while reforms of various kinds were being inaugurated in India, that a child was born of poor Brâhmin parents on the eighteenth of February, 1836, in one of the remote villages of Bengal. The father and mother were very orthodox people. The life of a really orthodox Brâhmin is one of continuous renunciation. Very few things can he do; and over and beyond them the orthodox Brâhmin must not occupy himself with any secular business. At the same time he must not receive gifts

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

from everybody. You may imagine how rigorous that life becomes. You have heard of the Brâhmins and their priest-craft many times, but very few of you have ever stopped to ask what makes this wonderful band of men the rulers of their fellows. They are the poorest of all the classes in the country; and the secret of their power lies in their renunciation. They never covet wealth. Theirs is the poorest priesthood in the world, and therefore the most powerful. Even in this poverty, a Brâhmin's wife will never allow a poor man to pass through the village without giving him something to eat. That is considered the highest duty of the mother in India; and because she is the mother it is her duty to be served last; she must see that every one is served before her turn comes. That is why the mother is regarded as God in India. This particular woman, the mother of our subject, was the very type of a Hindu

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

mother. The higher the caste, the greater the restrictions. The lowest caste people can eat and drink anything they like, but as men rise in the social scale, more and more restrictions come; and when they reach the highest caste, the Brâhmin, the hereditary priesthood of India, their lives, as I have said, are very much circumscribed. Compared to Western manners, their lives are of continuous asceticism. The Hindus are perhaps the most exclusive nation in the world. They have the same great steadiness as the English, but much more amplified. When they get hold of an idea they carry it out to its very conclusion, and they keep hold of it generation after generation until they make something out of it. Once give them an idea and it is not easy to take it back; but it is hard to make them grasp a new idea.

The orthodox Hindus, therefore, are very exclusive, living entirely within

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

their own horizon of thought and feeling. Their lives are laid down in our old books in every little detail, and the least detail is grasped with almost adamantine firmness by them. They would starve rather than eat a meal cooked by the hands of a man not belonging to their own small section of caste. But withal, they have intensity and tremendous earnestness. That force of intense faith and religious life occurs often among the orthodox Hindus, because their very orthodoxy comes from a tremendous conviction that it is right. We may not all think that, what they hold on to with such perseverance is right; but to them it is. Now, it is written in our books that a man should always be charitable even to the extreme. If a man starves himself to death to help another man, to save that man's life, it is all right; it is even held that a man ought to do that. And it is expected

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

of a Brâhmin to carry this idea out to the very extreme. Those who are acquainted with the literature of India will remember a beautiful old story about this extreme charity, how a whole family, as related in the Mahâbhârata, starved themselves to death and gave their last meal to a beggar. This is not an exaggeration, for such things still happen. The character of the father and the mother of my Master was very much like that. Very poor they were and yet many a time the mother would starve herself a whole day to help a poor man. Of them this child was born and he was a peculiar child from very boyhood. He remembered his past from his birth, and was conscious for what purpose he came into the world, and every power was devoted to the fulfilment of that purpose.

While he was quite young his father died and the boy was sent to school. A Brâhmin's boy must go to school; the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

caste restricts him to a learned profession only. The old system of education in India, still prevalent in many parts of the country, especially in connection with Sannyâsins, is very different from the modern system. The students had not to pay. It was thought that knowledge is so sacred that no man ought to sell it. Knowledge must be given freely and without any price. The teachers used to take students without charge, and not only so, most of them gave their students food and clothes. To support these teachers the wealthy families on certain occasions, such as a marriage festival, or at the ceremonies for the dead, made gifts to them. They were considered the first and foremost claimants to certain gifts; and they in their turn had to maintain their students. So whenever there is a marriage, especially in a rich family, these professors are invited, and they attend and discuss various subjects. This boy went to one of these gatherings

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

of professors, and the professors were discussing various topics, such as logic or astronomy, subjects much beyond his age. The boy was peculiar, as I have said, and he gathered this moral out of it: "This is the outcome of all their knowledge. Why are they fighting so hard? It is simply for money; the man who can show the highest learning here will get the best pair of cloth, and that is all these people are struggling for. I will not go to school any more." And he did not; that was the end of his going to school. But this boy had an elder brother, a learned professor, who took him to Calcutta, however, to study with him. After a short time the boy became fully convinced that the aim of all secular learning was mere material advancement, and nothing more, and he resolved to give up study and devote himself solely to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The father being dead, the family was very poor; and this boy

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

had to make his own living. He went to a place near Calcutta and became a temple priest. To become a temple priest is thought very degrading to a Brâhmin. Our temples are not churches in your sense of the word, they are not places for public worship; for, properly speaking, there is no such thing as public worship in India. Temples are erected mostly by rich persons as a meritorious religious act.

If a man has much property he wants to build a temple. In that, he puts a symbol or an image of an Incarnation of God, and dedicates it to worship in the name of God. The worship is akin to that which is conducted in Roman Catholic churches, very much like the mass, reading certain sentences from the Sacred Books, waving a light before the image, and treating the image in every respect as we treat a great man. This is all that is done in the temple. The man who goes to a temple is not con-

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

sidered thereby a better man than he who never goes. More properly, the latter is considered the more religious man, for religion in India is to each man, his own private affair. In the house of every man there is either a little chapel, or a room set apart, and there he goes morning and evening, sits down in a corner, and there does his worship. And this worship is entirely mental, for another man does not hear or know what he is doing. He sees him only sitting there, and perhaps moving his fingers in a peculiar fashion, or closing his nostrils and breathing in a peculiar manner. Beyond that, he does not know what his brother is doing; even his wife, perhaps, will not know. Thus, all worship is conducted in the privacy of his own home. Those who cannot afford to have a chapel go to the banks of a river, or a lake, or the sea if they live at the seaside, and people sometimes go to worship in a temple by making saluta-

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

tion to the image. There their duty to the temple ends. Therefore, you see, it has been held from the most ancient times in our country, legislated upon by Manu, that it is a degenerating occupation to become a temple priest. Some of the books say it is so degrading as to make a Brâhmin worthy of reproach. There is another idea behind it, that, just as with education, but in a far more intense sense with religion, the fact that temple priests take fees for their work is making merchandise of sacred things. So you may imagine the feelings of that boy when he was forced through poverty to take up the only occupation open to him, that of a temple priest.

There have been various poets in Bengal whose songs have passed down to the people; they are sung in the streets of Calcutta and in every village. Most of these are religious songs, and their one central idea, which is perhaps peculiar

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

to the religions of India, is the idea of realisation. There is not a book in India on religion which does not breathe this idea. Man must realise God, feel God, see God, talk to God. That is religion. The Indian atmosphere is full of stories of saintly persons having visions of God. Such doctrines form the basis of their religion; and all these ancient books and scriptures are the writings of persons who came into direct contact with spiritual facts. These books were not written for the intellect, nor can any reasoning understand them, because they were written by men who saw the things of which they wrote, and they can be understood only by men who have raised themselves to the same height. They say there is such a thing as realisation even in this life, and it is open to every one, and religion begins with the opening of this faculty, if I may call it so. This is the central idea in all religions and this is why we may find one

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

man with the most finished oratorical powers, or the most convincing logic, preaching the highest doctrines and yet unable to get people to listen to him; while we may find another, a poor man, who scarcely can speak the language of his own motherland, yet half the nation worships him in his own lifetime as God. When in India the idea somehow or other gets abroad that a man has raised himself to that state of realisation, that religion is no more a matter of conjecture to him, that he is no more groping in the dark in such momentous questions as religion, the immortality of the soul, and God, people come from all quarters to see him and gradually they begin to worship him.

In the temple was an image of the "Blissful Mother". This boy had to conduct the worship morning and evening, and by degrees this one idea filled his mind: "Is there anything behind this image? Is it true that there is a Mother

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

of Bliss in the universe? Is it true that She lives and guides this universe, or is it all a dream? Is there any reality in religion?"

This scepticism comes to the Hindu child. It is the scepticism of our country: Is this that we are doing real? And theories will not satisfy us, although there are ready at hand almost all the theories that have ever been made with regard to God and soul. Neither books nor theories can satisfy us, the one idea that gets hold of thousands of our people is this idea of realisation. Is it true that there is a God? If it be true, can I see Him? Can I realise the truth? The Western mind may think all this very impracticable, but to us it is intensely practical. For this idea men will give up their lives. You have just heard how from the earliest times there have been persons who have given up all comforts and luxuries to live in caves, and hundreds have given up their homes to

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

weep bitter tears of misery, on the banks of sacred rivers, in order to realise this idea, not to know, in the ordinary sense of the word, not intellectual understanding, not a mere rationalistic comprehension of the real thing, not mere groping in the dark, but intense realisation, much more real than this world is to our senses. That is the idea. I do not advance any proposition as to that just now, but that is the one fact that is impressed upon them. Thousands will be killed, other thousands will be ready. So upon this one idea the whole nation for thousands of years have been denying and sacrificing themselves. For this idea thousands of Hindus every year give up their homes and many of them die through the hardships they have to undergo. To the Western mind this must seem most visionary, and I can see the reasons for this point of view. But though I have resided in the West, I

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

still think this idea the most practical thing in life.

Every moment I think of anything else is so much loss to me—even the marvels of earthly sciences; everything is vain if it takes me away from that thought. Life is but momentary, whether you have the knowledge of an angel or the ignorance of an animal. Life is but momentary, whether you have the poverty of the poorest man in rags or the wealth of the richest living person. Life is but momentary, whether you are a downtrodden man living in one of the big streets of the big cities of the West or a crowned Emperor ruling over millions. Life is but momentary, whether you have the best of health or the worst. Life is but momentary whether you have the most poetical temperament or the most cruel. There is but one solution of life, says the Hindu, and that solution is what they call God and religion. If these be true, life becomes

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

explained, life becomes bearable, becomes enjoyable. Otherwise, life is but a useless burden. That is our idea, but no amount of reasoning can demonstrate it; it can only make it probable, and there it rests. The highest demonstration of reasoning that we have in any branch of knowledge can only make a fact probable, and nothing further. The most demonstrable facts of physical science are only probabilities, not facts yet. Facts are only in the senses. Facts have to be perceived, and we have to perceive religion to demonstrate it to ourselves. We have to sense God to be convinced that there is a God. We must sense the facts of religion to know that they are facts. Nothing else, and no amount of reasoning, but our own perception can make these things real to us, can make my belief firm as a rock. That is my idea, and that is the Indian idea.

This idea took possession of the boy

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

and his whole life became concentrated upon that. Day after day he would weep and say, "Mother, is it true that Thou existest, or is it all poetry? Is the Blissful Mother an imagination of poets and misguided people, or is there such a Reality?" We have seen that of books, of education in our sense of the word, he had none, and so much the more natural, so much the more healthy was his mind, so much the purer his thoughts, undiluted by drinking in the thoughts of others. Because he did not go to the university, therefore he thought for himself. Because we have spent half our lives in the university we are filled with a collection of other people's thoughts. Well has Prof. Max Müller said in the article I have just referred to, that this was a clean, original man; and the secret of that originality was that he was not brought up within the precincts of a university. However, this thought—whether God

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

can be seen—which was uppermost in his mind gained in strength every day until he could think of nothing else. He could no more conduct the worship properly, could no more attend to the various details in all their minuteness. Often he would forget to place the food-offering before the image, sometimes he would forget to wave the light; at other times he would wave it for hours, and forget everything else.

And that one idea was in his mind every day: "Is it true that Thou existest, O Mother? Why dost Thou not speak? Art Thou dead?" Perhaps some of us here will remember that there are moments in our lives when, tired of all these ratiocinations of dull and dead logic, tired of plodding through books—which after all teach us nothing, become nothing but a sort of intellectual opium-eating—we must have it at stated times or we die—tired with all this, the heart of our hearts

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

sends out a wail: "Is there no one in this universe who can show me the light? If Thou art, show the light unto me. Why dost Thou not speak? Why dost Thou make Thyself so scarce, why send so many Messengers and not Thyself come to me? In this world of fights and factions whom am I to follow and believe? If Thou art the God of every man and woman alike, why comest Thou not to speak to Thy child and see if he is not ready?" Well, to us all come such thoughts in moments of great depression; but such are the temptations surrounding us, that the next moment we forget. For the moment it seemed that the doors of the heavens were going to be opened, for the moment it seemed as if we were going to plunge into the light effulgent; but the animal man again shakes off all these angelic visions. Down we go, animal man once more, eating and drinking and dying, and dying and

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

drinking and eating again and again. But there are exceptional minds which are not turned away so easily, which once attracted can never be turned back, whatever may be the temptation in the way, which want to see the Truth, knowing that life must go. They say, let it go in a noble conquest, and what conquest is nobler than the conquest of the lower man, than this solution of the problem of life and death, of good and evil?

At last it became impossible for him to serve in the temple. He left it and entered into a little wood that was near and lived there. About this part of his life, he told me many times that he could not tell when the sun rose or set, or how he lived. He lost all thought of himself and forgot to eat. During this period he was lovingly watched over by a relative who put into his mouth food which he mechanically swallowed.

Days and nights thus passed with the

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

boy. When a whole day would pass, towards the evening, when the peal of bells in the temples, and the voices singing, would reach the wood, it would make the boy very sad, and he would cry, "Another day is gone in vain, Mother, and Thou hast not come. Another day of this short life has gone, and I have not known the Truth." In the agony of his soul, sometimes he would rub his face against the ground and weep, and this one prayer burst forth: "Do Thou manifest Thyself in me, Thou Mother of the Universe! See that I need Thee, and nothing else!" Verily, he wanted to be true to his own ideal. He had heard that the Mother never came until everything had been given up for Her. He had heard that the Mother wanted to come to everyone, but they would not have Her, that people wanted all sorts of foolish little idols to pray to, that they wanted their own enjoyments, and not the Mother,

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

and that the moment they really wanted Her with their whole soul, and nothing else, that moment She would come. So he began to break himself into the idea; he wanted to be exact, even on the plane of matter. He threw away all the little property he had, and took a vow that he would never touch money, and this one idea, "I will not touch money," became a part of him. It may appear to be something occult; but even in after-life, when he was sleeping, if I touched him with a piece of money his hand would become bent, and his whole body would become, as it were, paralysed. The other idea that came into his mind was that lust was the other enemy. Man is a soul, and soul is sexless, neither man nor woman. The idea of sex and the idea of money were the two things, he thought, that prevented him from seeing the Mother. This whole universe is the manifestation of the Mother, and She lives in every woman's

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

body. "Every woman represents the Mother; how can I think of woman in mere sex relation?" That was the idea. Every woman was his Mother, he must bring himself to the state when he would see nothing but Mother in every woman; and he carried it out in his life.

This is the tremendous thirst that seizes the human heart. Later on, this very man said to me, "My child, suppose there is a bag of gold in one room, and a robber in the next room; do you think that robber can sleep? He cannot. His mind will be always thinking how to get into that room and obtain possession of that gold. Do you think then that a man firmly persuaded that there is a Reality behind all these appearances, that there is a God, that there is One who never dies, One who is infinite bliss, a bliss compared with which these pleasures of the senses are simply playthings, can rest contented without struggling to attain It? Can he cease

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

his efforts for a moment? No. He will become mad with longing." This divine madness seized the boy. At that time he had no teacher, nobody to tell him anything, and every one thought that he was out of his mind. This is the ordinary condition of things. If a man throws aside the vanities of the world, we hear him called mad, but such men are the salt of the earth. Out of such madness have come the powers that have moved this world of ours, and out of such madness alone will come the powers of the future, that are going to move the world.

So days, weeks, months passed in continuous struggle of the soul to arrive at truth. The boy began to see visions, to see wonderful things; the secrets of his nature were beginning to open to him. Veil after veil was, as it were, being taken off. Mother Herself became the teacher and initiated the boy into the truths he sought. At this time there

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

came to this place a woman of beautiful appearance, learned beyond compare. Later on, this saint used to say about her that she was not learned, but was the embodiment of learning; she was learning itself, in human form. There too, you find the peculiarity of the Indian nation. In the midst of the ignorance in which the average Hindu woman lives, in the midst of what is called in Western countries her lack of freedom, there could arise a woman of supreme spirituality. She was a Sannyâsini; for women also give up the world, throw away their property, do not marry, and devote themselves to the worship of the Lord. She came; and when she heard of this boy in the grove, she offered to go and see him; and hers was the first help he received. At once she recognised what his trouble was, and she said to him, "My son, blessed is the man upon whom such madness comes. The whole of this

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

universe is mad—some for wealth, some for pleasure, some for fame, some for a hundred other things. They are mad for gold, or husbands, or wives, for little trifles, mad to tyrannise over somebody, mad to become rich, mad for every foolish thing except God. And they can only understand their own madness. When another man is mad after gold, they have fellow-feeling and sympathy for him, and they say he is the right man, as lunatics think that lunatics alone are sane. But if a man is mad after the Beloved, after the Lord, how can they understand? They think he has gone crazy, and they say, 'Have nothing to do with him.' That is why they call you mad; but yours is the right kind of madness. Blessed is the man who is mad after God. Such men are very few." This woman remained near the boy for years, taught him the forms of the religions of India, initiated him into the different practices of Yoga,

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

and, as it were, guided and brought into harmony this tremendous river of spirituality.

Later, there came to the same grove a Sannyâsin, one of the begging-friars of India, a learned man, a philosopher. He was a peculiar man, he was an idealist. He did not believe that this world existed in reality; and to demonstrate that, he would never go under a roof, he would always live out of doors, in storm and sunshine alike. This man began to teach the boy the philosophy of the Vedas; and he found very soon, to his astonishment, that the pupil was in some respects wiser than the master. He spent several months with the boy, after which he initiated him into the order of Sannyâsins, and took his departure.

When as a temple priest his extraordinary worship made people think him deranged in his head, his relatives took him home and married him to a little

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

girl, thinking that that would turn his thoughts and restore the balance of his mind. But he came back and, as we have seen, merged deeper in his madness. Sometimes, in our country, boys and girls are married as children and have no voice in the matter; their parents marry them. Of course such a marriage is little more than a betrothal. When they are married they still continue to live with their parents, and the real marriage takes place when the wife grows older, when it is customary for the husband to go and bring his bride to his own home. In this case, however, the husband had entirely forgotten that he had a wife. In her far-off home the girl had heard that her husband had become a religious enthusiast, and that he was even considered insane by many. She resolved to learn the truth for herself, so she set out and walked to the place where her husband was. When at last she stood in her

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

husband's presence, he at once admitted her right to his life; although in India any person, man or woman, who embraces a religious life, is thereby freed from all other obligations. The young man fell at the feet of his wife and said, "As for me, the Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so I have learned to look upon every woman, as Mother. That is the one idea I can have about you; but if you wish to drag me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service." The maiden was a pure and noble soul, and was able to understand her husband's aspirations and sympathise with them. She quickly told him that she had no wish to drag him down to a life of worldliness; but that all she desired was to remain near him, to serve him and to learn of him. She became one of his most devoted disciples, always revering him as a divine being. Thus through his wife's

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

consent the last barrier was removed and he was free to lead the life he had chosen.

The next desire that seized upon the soul of this man was to know the truth about the various religions. Up to that time he had not known any religion but his own. He wanted to understand what other religions were like. So, he sought teachers of other religions. By teachers you must always remember what we mean in India, not a book-worm, but a man of realisation, one who knows truth at first-hand and not through an intermediary. He found a Mohammedan saint and went to live with him; he underwent the disciplines prescribed by him, and to his astonishment found that when faithfully carried out, these devotional methods led him to the same goal he had already attained. He gathered similar experience from following the true religion of Jesus the Christ. He went to all the

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

sects he could find, and whatever he took up he went into with his whole heart. He did exactly as he was told, and in every instance he arrived at the same result. Thus from actual experience, he came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, that each is trying to teach the same thing, the difference being largely in method, and still more in language. At the core, all sects and all religions have the same aim; and they were only quarrelling for their own selfish purposes—they were not anxious about the truth, but about "my name" and "your name". Two of them preached the same truth, but one of them said, "That cannot be true, because I have not put upon it the seal of my name. Therefore do not listen to him." And the other man said, "Do not hear him, although he is preaching very much the same thing, yet it is not true because he does not preach it in my name."

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

That is what my Master found, and he then set about to learn humility, because he had found that the one idea in all religions is, "not me, but Thou," and he who says, "not me," the Lord fills his heart. The less of this little "I" the more of God there is in him. That he found to be the truth in every religion in the world, and he set himself to accomplish this. As I have told you, whenever he wanted to do anything he never confined himself to fine theories, but would enter into the practice immediately. We see many persons talking the most wonderfully fine things about charity and about equality and the rights of other people and all that, but it is only in theory. I was so fortunate as to find one who was able to carry theory into practice. He had the most wonderful faculty of carrying everything into practice which he thought was right.

Now, there was a family of Pariahs

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

living near the place. The Pariahs number several millions in the whole of India, and are a set of people so low that some of our books say, that if a Brâhmin coming out from his house sees the face of a Pariah, he has to fast that day and recite certain prayers, before he becomes holy again. In some Hindu cities when a Pariah enters, he has to put a crow's feather on his head, as a sign that he is a Pariah, and he has to cry aloud, "Save yourselves, the Pariah is passing through the street", and you will find people flying off from him as if by magic, because if they touch him by chance, they will have to change their clothes, bathe, and do other things. And the Pariah for thousands of years has believed that it is perfectly right; that his touch will make everybody unholy. Now, my Master would go to a Pariah and ask to be allowed to clean his house. The business of the Pariah is to clean the

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

streets of the cities, and to keep houses clean. He cannot enter the house by the front door; by the back door he enters, and as soon as he has gone the whole place over which he has passed is sprinkled with and made holy by a little Ganges water. By birth the Brâhmin stands for holiness, and the Pariah for the very reverse. And this Brâhmin asked to be allowed to do the menial services in the house of the Pariah. The Pariah of course could not allow that, for they all think that if they allow a Brâhmin to do such menial work it will be an awful sin, and they will become extinct. The Pariah would not permit it; so in the dead of night, when all were sleeping, Ramakrishna would enter the house. He had long hair, and with his hair he would wipe the place, saying, "O, my Mother, make me the servant of the Pariah, make me feel that I am even lower than the Pariah." "They worship Me best,

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

who worship My worshippers. These are all My children and your privilege is to serve them"—is the teaching of Hindu scriptures.

There were various other preparations, which would take a long time to relate, and I want to give you just a sketch of his life. For years he thus educated himself. One of the Sâdhanâs was to root out the sex idea. Soul has no sex, it is neither male nor female. It is only in the body that sex exists, and the man who desires to reach the spirit cannot at the same time hold to sex distinctions. Having been born in a masculine body, this man wanted to bring the feminine idea into everything. He began to think that he was a woman, he dressed like a woman, spoke like a woman, gave up the occupations of men, and lived in the household among the women of a good family, until, after years of this discipline, his mind became changed, and he entirely

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

forgot the idea of sex; thus the whole view of life became changed to him.

We hear in the West about worshipping woman, but this is usually for her youth and beauty. This man meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman's face was that of the Blissful Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears, saying, "Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother, I salute Thee." Think of the blessedness of that life from which all carnality has vanished, which can look upon every woman with that love and reverence, when every woman's face becomes transfigured, and only the face of the Divine Mother, the Blissful One, the Protectress of the human race, shines upon it! That is what we want. Do you mean to say that the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

divinity back of woman can ever be cheated? It never was and never will be. It always asserts itself. Unfailingly it detects fraud, it detects hypocrisy, unerringly it feels the warmth of truth, the light of spirituality, the holiness of purity. Such purity is absolutely necessary if real spirituality is to be attained.

This rigorous, unsullied purity came into the life of that man. All the struggles which we have in our lives were past for him. His hard-earned jewels of spirituality, for which he had given three-quarters of his life, were now ready to be given to humanity, and then began his mission. His teaching and preaching were peculiar. In our country a teacher is a most highly venerated person, he is regarded as God Himself. We have not even the same respect for our father and mother. Father and mother give us our body, but the teacher shows us the way to salvation.

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

We are his children, we are born in the spiritual line of the teacher. All Hindus come to pay respect to an extra-ordinary teacher, they crowd around him. And here was such a teacher, but the teacher had no thought whether he was to be respected or not, he had not the least idea that he was a great teacher, he thought that it was Mother who was doing everything and not he. He always said: "If any good comes from my lips, it is the Mother who speaks; what have I to do with it?" That was his one idea about his work, and to the day of his death he never gave it up. This man sought no one. His principle was, first form character, first earn spirituality, and results will come of themselves. His favourite illustration was, "When the lotus opens, the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey; so let the lotus of your character be full-blown and the results will follow." This is a great lesson to learn.

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

My Master taught me this lesson hundreds of times, yet I often forget it. Few understand the power of thought. If a man goes into a cave, shuts himself in, and thinks one really great thought and dies, that thought will penetrate the walls of that cave, vibrate through space, and at last permeate the whole human race. Such is the power of thought; be in no hurry therefore to give your thoughts to others. First have something to give. He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating. Spirituality can be communicated just as really as I can give you a flower. This is true in the most literal sense. This idea is very old in India and finds illustration in the West in the theory, in the belief, of apostolic succession. Therefore, first make character—that is the highest duty you can perform. Know Truth for yourself, and there will be

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

many to whom you can teach it afterwards; they will all come. This was the attitude of my Master. He criticised no one. For years I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of condemnation for any sect. He had the same sympathy for all sects; he had found the harmony between them. A man may be intellectual, or devotional, or mystic, or active; the various religions represent one or the other of these types. Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.

People came by thousands to see and hear this wonderful man, who spoke in a *patois,* every word of which was forceful and instinct with light. For it is not what is spoken, much less the language in which it is spoken, but it is the personality of the speaker which dwells

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

in everything he says that carries weight. Everyone of us feels this at times. We hear most splendid orations, most wonderfully reasoned-out discourses, and we go home and forget them all. At other times we hear a few words in the simplest language, and they enter into our lives, become part and parcel of ourselves and produce lasting results. The words of a man who can put his personality into them, take effect, but he must have tremendous personality. All teaching implies giving and taking, the teacher gives and the taught receives, but the one must have something to give, and the other must be open to receive.

This man came to live near Calcutta, the capital of India, the most important university town in our country, which was sending out sceptics and materialists by the hundreds every year, yet many of these university men, sceptics and agnostics, used to come and listen to him.

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

I heard of this man, and I went to hear him. He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought, "Can this man be a great teacher?"—crept near to him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life, "Do you believe in God, sir?" "Yes," he replied. "Can you prove it, sir?" "Yes." "How?" "Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense." That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life. I have read about Buddha and Christ and Mohammed, about all those different luminaries of ancient times,

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

how they would stand up and say, "Be thou whole," and the man became whole. I now found it to be true when I myself saw this man, all scepticism was brushed aside. It could be done, and my Master used to say: "Religion can be given and taken more tangibly, more really than anything else in the world." Be therefore spiritual first; have something to give, and then stand before the world and give it. Religion is not talk, or doctrines or theories; nor is it sectarianism. Religion cannot live in sects and societies. It is the relation between the soul and God; how can it be made into a society? It would then degenerate into business and wherever there are business and business principles in religion, spirituality dies. Religion does not consist in erecting temples, or building churches, or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books, or in words, or in lectures, or in organisations. Re-

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

ligion consists in realisation. As a fact, we all know that nothing will satisfy us until we know the truth for ourselves. However we may argue, however much we may hear, but one thing will satisfy us, and that is our own realisation; and such an experience is possible for every one of us, if we will only try. The first ideal of this attempt to realise religion is that of renunciation. As far as we can, we must give up. Darkness and light, enjoyment of the world and enjoyment of God, will never go together. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Let people try it if they will, and I have seen millions in every country who have tried; but after all, it comes to nothing. If one word remains true in the saying, it is, give up everything for the sake of the Lord. This is a hard and long task, but you can begin it here and now. Bit by bit we must go towards it.

The second idea that I learned from my Master, and which is perhaps the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic; they are but various phases of One Eternal Religion; that One Eternal Religion is applied to different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can. Religions manifest themselves not only according to race and geographical position, but according to individual powers. In one man, religion is manifesting itself as intense activity, as work. In another, it is manifesting itself as intense devotion, in yet another,

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

as mysticism, in others as philosophy, and so forth. It is wrong when we say to others, "Your methods are not right." Perhaps a man, whose nature is that of love, thinks that the man who does good to others is not on the right road to religion, because it is not his own way, and is therefore wrong. If the philosopher thinks, "Oh, the poor ignorant people, what do they know about a God of Love, and loving Him; they do not know what they mean," he is wrong, because they may be right and he also.

To learn this central secret that the truth may be one and yet many at the same time, that we may have different visions of the same truth from different standpoints, is exactly what must be done. Then, instead of antagonism to any one, we shall have infinite sympathy with all. Knowing that as long as there are different natures born in this world, the same religious truth will

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

require different adaptations, we shall understand that we are bound to have forbearance with each other. Just as nature is unity in variety,—an infinite variation in the phenomenal, that in and through all these variations of the phenomenal runs the Infinite, the Unchangeable, the Absolute Unity—so it is with every man; the microcosm is but a miniature repetition of the macrocosm; in spite of all these variations, in and through them all runs this eternal harmony, and we have to recognise this. This idea, above all other ideas, I find to be the crying necessity of the day. Coming from a country which is a hotbed of religious sects—and in which, through its good fortune or ill fortune, everyone who has a religious idea wants to send an advance-guard—I have been acquainted from my childhood with the various sects of the world. Even the Mormons came to preach in India. Welcome them all! That is the soil on

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

which to preach religion. There it takes root more than in any other country. If you come and teach politics to the Hindus they do not understand; but if you come to preach religion, however curious it may be, you will have hundreds and thousands of followers in no time, and you have every chance of becoming a living God in your lifetime. I am glad it is so, it is the one thing we want in India.

The sects among the Hindus are various, a great many in number, and some of them apparently hopelessly contradictory. Yet they all tell you they are but different manifestations of religion. "As different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running crooked or straight, all come and mingle their waters in the occean, so the different sects, with their different points of view, at last all come unto Thee." This is not a theory, it has to be recognised, but not in that patronising way which

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

we see with some people, "Oh yes, there are some very good things in it. These are what we call the ethnical religions. These ethnical religions have some good in them." Some even have the most wonderfully liberal idea that other religions are all little bits of a prehistoric evolution, but "ours is the fulfilment of things." One may say because his is the oldest religion, it is the best; another makes the same claim because his is the latest. We have to recognise that each one of them has the same saving power as the other. What you have heard about their difference, whether in the temple or in the church, is a mass of superstition. The same God answers all, and it is not you, or I, or any body of men, that is responsible for the safety and salvation of the least little bit of the soul; the same Almighty God is responsible for all. I do not understand how people declare themselves to be believers in God, and at the same time

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

think that God has handed over to a little body of men all truth, and that they are the guardians of the rest of humanity. How can you call that religion? Religion is realisation; but mere talk—mere trying to believe, mere groping in darkness, mere parroting the words of ancestors, and thinking it is religion, mere making a political something out of the truths of religion—is not religion at all.

In every sect—even among the Mohammedans whom we always regard as the most exclusive—even among them we find that wherever there was a man trying to realise religion, from his lips have come the fiery words: "Thou art the Lord of all. Thou art in the heart of all, Thou art the guide of all, Thou art the Teacher of all, and Thou carest infinitely more for the land of Thy children than we can ever do". Do not try to disturb the faith of any man. If you can, give him something better; if

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

you can, get hold of a man where he stands and give him a push upwards; do so, but do not destroy what he has. The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice. The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else. All these negative, breaking-down, destructive teachers that are in the world, can never do any good.

In the presence of my Master I found out that man could be perfect, even in this body. Those lips never cursed anyone, never even criticised anyone. Those eyes were beyond the possibility of seeing evil, that mind had lost the power of thinking evil. He saw nothing but good. That tremendous purity,

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varanasi

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

that tremendous renunciation is the one secret of spirituality. "Neither through wealth, nor through progeny, but through renunciation alone, is immortality to be reached", say the Vedas. "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and follow Me," says the Christ. So all great saints and Prophets have expressed it, and have carried it out in their lives. How can great spirituality come without that renunciation? Renunciation is the background of all religious thought wherever it be, and you will always find that as this idea of renunciation lessens, the more will the senses creep into the field of religion, and spirituality will decrease in the same ratio.

That man was the embodiment of renunciation. In our country it is necessary for a man who becomes a Sannyâsin to give up all worldly wealth and position, and this my Master carried out literally. There were many who would

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

have felt themselves blest, if he would only have accepted a present from their hands, who would gladly have given him thousands of rupees if he would have taken them, but these were the only men from whom he would turn away. He was a triumphant example, a living realisation of the complete conquest of lust, and of desire for money. He was beyond all ideas of either, and such men are necessary for this century. Such renunciation is necessary in these days when men have begun to think that they cannot live a month without what they call their "necessities," and which they are increasing out of all proportion. It is necessary in a time like this that a man should arise to demonstrate to the sceptics of the world that there yet breathes a man who does not care a straw for all the gold or all the fame that is in the universe. Yet there are such men.

The other idea of his life was intense love for others. The first part of my

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

Master's life was spent in acquiring spirituality and the remaining years in distributing it. People in our country have not the same customs as you have in visiting a religious teacher, or a Sannyâsin. Somebody would come to ask him about something, some perhaps would come hundreds of miles, walking all the way, just to ask one question, to hear one word from him. "Tell me one word for my salvation". That is the way they come. They come in numbers, unceremoniously, to the place where he is mostly to be found; they may find him under a tree, and question him, and before one set of people has gone, others have arrived. So, if a man is greatly revered he will sometimes have no rest day or night. He will have to talk constantly. For hours, people will come pouring in, and this man will be teaching them.

So men came in crowds to hear him and he would talk twenty hours in the

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months and months, until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually there developed a vital throat disorder, and yet he could not be persuaded to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, "I do not care. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man." There was no rest for him. Once a man asked him: "Sir, you are a great Yogi, why do you not put your mind a little on your body and cure your disease?" At first he did not answer, but when the question had been repeated, he gently said, "My

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

friend, I thought you were a sage, but you talk like other men of the world. This mind has been given to the Lord, do you mean to say that I should take it back and put it upon the body, which is but a mere cage of the soul?"

So he went on preaching to the people, and the news spread that his body was about to pass away, and the people began to flock to him in greater crowds than ever. You cannot imagine the way they come to these great religious teachers in India, how they crowd round them and make gods of them while they are yet living. Thousands wait simply to touch the hem of their garments. It is through this appreciation of spirituality in others that spirituality is produced. Whatever man wants and appreciates, he will get; and it is the same with nations. If you go to India and deliver a political lecture, however grand it may be, you will scarcely find people to listen to you;

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

but just go and teach religion, *live* it, not merely talk it, and hundreds will crowd just to look at you, to touch your feet. When the people heard that this holy man was likely to go from them soon, they began to come round him more than ever, and my Master went on teaching them without the least regard for his health. We could not prevent this. Many of the people came from long distances, and he would not rest until he had answered their questions. "While I can speak, I must teach them," he would say, and he was as good as his word. One day, he told us that he would lay down the body that day, and repeating the most sacred word of the Vedas he entered into Samâdhi and passed away.

His thoughts and his message were known to very few capable of giving them out. Among others he left a few young boys who had renounced the world, and were ready to carry on his

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

work. Attempts were made to crush them. But they stood firm, having the inspiration of that great life before them. Having had the contact of that blessed life for years, they stood their ground. These young men, living as Sannyâsins, begged through the streets of the city where they were born, although some of them came from high families. At first they met with great antagonism, but they persevered and went on from day to day spreading all over India the message of that great man, until the whole country was filled with the ideas he had preached. This man, from a remote village of Bengal, without education, by the sheer force of his own determination, realised the truth and gave it to others, leaving only a few young boys to keep it alive.

Today the name of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is known all over India by its millions of people. Nay, the power of that man has spread be-

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

yond India, and if there has ever been a word of truth, a word of spirituality, that I have spoken anywhere in the world, I owe it to my Master; only the mistakes are mine.

This is the message of Shri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

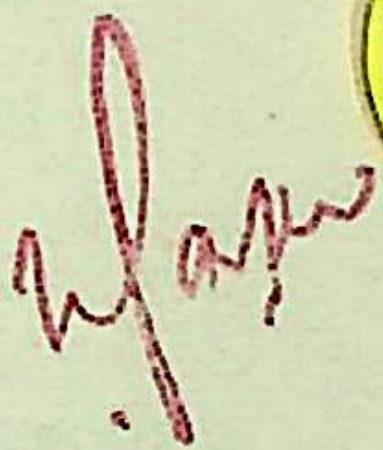
Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore, my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realise truth for yourself." He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realisation; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel. And then only will you be ready to help humanity. To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

religion undisturbed because he had realised that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion.



C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

LIFE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

With a Foreword

By Mahatma Gandhi

Price: Board Rs. 7; Cloth Rs. 8.

LIFE OF RAMAKRISHNA

By Romain Rolland

Price: Rs. 5.

A SHORT LIFE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Price: Re. 1.

RAMAKRISHNA: HIS LIFE & SAYINGS

By Prof. F. Max Muller

Price: Rs. 5.

TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Price: Rs. 5.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA

4- Wellington Lane

CALCUTTA 13

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

In 8 vols. of about 3,800 pages with Index.

Price: Per Volume.

Board: Rs. 6/8; Cloth: Rs. 8.

KARMA YOGA

Price: Ordy.: Re. 1/4; Cloth: Rs. 2.

BHAKTI YOGA

Price: Ordy.: Re. 1/4; Cloth: Rs. 2.

RAJA YOGA

Price: Ordy.: Rs. 2/12; Cloth: Rs. 3/12.

JNANA YOGA

Price: Ordy.: Rs. 3/4; Cloth: Rs. 4.

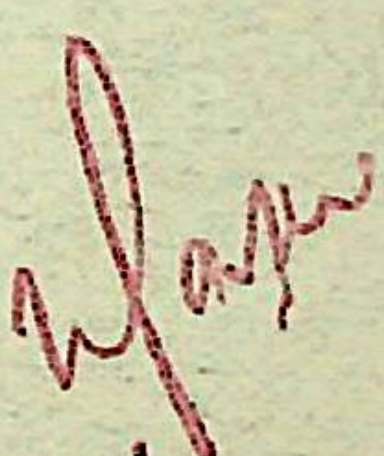
ADVAITA ASHRAMA
4 Wellington Lane
CALCUTTA 13

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS



C0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varana

Digitization by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. Funding by MoE-IKS

Price As. 6.

CC0. In Public Domain. Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram Collection, Varan